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ABSTRACT

Intended as a means of helping primary school teachers introduce children to economics in a pleasurable way, this booklet contains information about 12 children's books that illustrate basic economic concepts. The information provided for each book includes the concept it illustrates; its author, publisher, and date of publication; a summary of its content; suggestions for teaching techniques; lists of related activities and audiovisual materials. (FL)

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Economic Education thru...

LITERATURE

Primary Grades K-3

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INTRODUCTION

A child's first introduction to applied economics may occur at the supermarket as he observes his mother's selection and purchase of articles. His grasp of economics concepts, however, may come much later on or not at all.

Since economics affects us all in so many ways, it is my contention that its basic concepts can and should be gradually developed throughout a child's school experience. Thus, the purpose of the lessons which follow is to suggest to teachers of primary grades some books that readily lend themselves to such a purpose.

I have deliberately chosen books that seem to be favorites of the children because of their story content and their marvelous illustrations. It can only, therefore, enhance the children's appreciation of these fine books if they are helped to discover the economic aspects within that they might otherwise not have fully appreciated.

I would also like to make it clear that the books I have chosen are by no means the only books that would have suited my purpose. Frankly, it was difficult to decide which books I should use. When in doubt, I tried to guide myself primarily by the book's success in demonstrating the particular economic concept for which I have suggested teaching ideas.

If, by reading these books and engaging in the activities, young people gain an insight into beginning economics in a pleasurable way, I will feel that these lessons have filled the need for which they were intended.

Clare Buffon

Grade: Primary

Economic Concept: Wants

Literature: *Poems to Read to the Very Young*
selected by Josette Frank
Random House, New York, 1961.

In the poem "The Chickens" from *Poems to Read to the Very Young,* primary school youngsters would hear about the wants of a family of young chickens which will remind them of similar wants they hear expressed in their own homes. And even very young children could see that we all must choose certain things that we want very carefully because, whether it is a worm, a bug, meal, a leaf or gravel-stone, as in the case of the chickens or food, clothing, or toys in the case of the children, there is never enough to supply every one with everything he wants, no matter how hard he "scratches" for it.

Several readings of the poem plus some interested questionings by the teacher could lead to a discussion by the children of various foods or possessions they had wished for lately. The teacher should list these on the chalkboard. Later, the class could go over the list and decide where these wants orginated: in a desire for food, in a need for clothing, or perhaps in a wish for a toy, a book, or the like. And most will agree that they still want such things whether or not they really need them.

Now, ask the children to identify some of the things they have said they wanted but could have done without. Possibilities under food could be sweets or snacks, under clothing perhaps fad-following wearing apparel, and under toys some TV-promoted gadgets they wouldn't have even thought about without the prodding of advertising. Then point out that wants and needs are not the same. We want things for all sorts of different reasons according to whom we are and how we feel.

Related Activities:

1. Have each child draw a "wish" picture showing something he would like to have.
2. Ask each child to find out some of his parents' wishes. Then he could draw a picture of a wish that was described to him.
3. In magazines, find pictures of children and mount them on cardboard. Be sure that they represent all levels of society. Then ask the class what might be some of the things that these children would wish for.
4. On a bulletin board, have a large picture of a needy, ragged waif on one side and a picture of a well-fed, well-dressed child on the other. Surround the waif with pictures of necessities he might wish for such as rice, shoes, etc. Near the other child show the extras he might wish for such as sweets and toys. Be sure to make the point that all people have wants regardless of their ways of life.

Additional literature: Wants

The Big Jump and other Stories
by Benjamin Elkin
Random House, Toronto, 1958.

The Big Jump and other Stories by Benjamin Elkin has a number of good examples of people's wants. In "The Big Jump" itself, Ben wants a dog, but only kings may have dogs. Yet eventually, Ben, with the dog's help, finds a way to have what he wants.

In "Something New" the bad King's wants must be satisfied or he will require the good King's gold. So Ben and Jump help the good King as he searches for something new that will satisfy the wants of the bad King.

Finally, "The Wish Sack" concerns a magic sack that fulfills the wishes of those who say: "Abba Dabba!" Naturally, this is a sack that is attractive to everyone who knows about it.

All three stories in *The Big Jump and other Stories* will be helpful in talking about the things that people want as well as the methods they use in order to fulfill those wants.

Filmstrip: *"Frontierland."* Encyclopaedia Britannica Films, 50 frames, color, Walt Disney.
This filmstrip depicts life on the frontier as it is presented at Walt Disney's "Frontierland" at Disneyland in Anaheim, California.

Grade: Primary

Economic Concept: Consumerism

Literature: *Plenty of Fish* by Millicent Selsam Harper and Row, New York, 1960.

In the book *Plenty of Fish* by Millicent Selsam, a primary school child can observe how the wants of someone his age lead toward his becoming a consumer. In the story Willy wanted two goldfish, and furthermore, he had the money to buy them. Now he needed to find out the answers to some of the problems of all consumers, where goldfish are sold, how they are packaged, how each one is priced, what additional purchases are required as a result of owning goldfish, and where the money for those purchases might be obtained.

Now, ask the children what they must have at hand whenever they want to buy something. Since they will be sure to mention money, then ask them where their spending money comes from. The source of the money can be traced back quite simply from Mother or Daddy to Mother's or Daddy's job, and in many cases the children will be able to understand that the money for workers on jobs comes very often from money made in selling things like fish and fishbowls. As a matter of fact, Willy's wants are probably met when those in the family who work get their money from sales or services and then he can use it for buying. We are, therefore, all dependent on one another.

Another topic for discussion about Willy's purchases concerns the store owners. How do they know to keep fish, fish tanks, plants, and snails on hand in their stores? They have, of course, learned to stock them because many other little boys before Willy have wanted a goldfish as a pet, and their acts of buying have reminded the store owners to keep on ordering fish and fish supplies. This ordering in turn keeps the goldfish raisers in jobs as well as the makers of glass, the growers of plants, and the providers of snails. Thus each child can probably understand that his purchases, like Willy's, provide jobs which in turn allow more purchases to be made.

Related Activities:

1. Have each child bring an emptied grocery package to school such as a jello box, cereal box, or the like. Set up a grocery store on a table using the items provided by the children as merchandise. Most of the boxes will already have price marks on them, but any unmarked boxes should have prices marked on them too. Then, using play money, allow six children to make purchases from the store. They should choose items that would represent the wants of the whole class. Now they will find that they have turned over much of their money to the grocer. What will he do with it? In real life, they will discover, he will buy more groceries for his shelves and also pay the salaries of his workers. The additional groceries he buys will allow more people to satisfy their wants, and the salaries that his workers take home will allow more families to buy more groceries.
2. Ask the children why they have the shoes they are wearing. Why did they want them? Or was it their parents who wanted them to have shoes? Where did the money come from to buy the shoes? Did the store have the kind of shoes you wanted? Where will the store owner get more shoes for other children's wants? Questions such as these, if time is allowed for thoughtful answers, will bring home to the children the interdependence of our economy and reinforce the ideas on consumerism gained from reading and discussing *Plenty of Fish.*

Additional literature: Consumerism

The Lorax
by Dr. Seuss
Random House, New York, 1971.

In *The Lorax* by Dr. Seuss the children hear about many facets of consumerism. The people wanted "Thneeds" and bought them as fast as the factory could turn them out. Eventually, because too much merchandise had been turned out without enough thought about replacing used-up resources, the business closed up and the customers moved away.

The Lorax makes it plain that consumerism includes both care in buying and responsibility in selling. Reading the book will help reinforce the ideas already put forth in this lesson and also act as an introduction to the lessons that follow after this one. The children will enjoy Dr. Seuss's highly imaginative yet surprisingly true-to-life characters and will enjoy talking about the problems that these characters foretell.

Filmstrip: *"Caps for Sale."* Weston Woods, 34 frames, color, guide, record. This filmstrip tells the story of a peddler of caps of many colors and his problems with a band of imitative monkeys.

Grade: Primary

Literature: *Two is a Team*
by Lorraine and Jerrold Beim
Harcourt, Brace and Co.,
New York, 1945.

Economic Concept: Production

In *Two is a Team* by Lorraine and Jerrold Beim, the children will learn the value of teamwork in production. At first, the two boys in the story work independently but unsuccessfully at trying to build coasters; but later, by pooling their resources, efforts, and skills, they build a fine wagon that will bring them pleasure, pride, and profit.

A familiar example of production to many children would be that of a mother who sews at home. It would probably seem to them at first that the mother produces a garment all by herself. But when they are reminded of the pattern makers, the fabric weavers, and the pin and scissor makers whose efforts helped in the production of her garment, the young students could see that most efforts at production require teamwork: in materials, in know-how, and in labor.

Activities:

1. The best way to help young people understand the teamwork involved in production would be to take them on a field trip to a place where they could observe the various steps in making a product. A visit to a newspaper office, soft-drink bottling plant, or any other local manufacturer would lend substance to the ideas promulgated in *Two is a Team.*
2. After the trip has been made, the children should be encouraged to talk about their observations. Who seemed to be in charge of planning? Where did the materials come from? Who did the actual labor of assembling the product? Whose wants were being provided for by this product? And, finally, did they feel that the demand for this product would last for a long period of time?
3. In order to demonstrate the value of teamwork, the children could plan and put together a product of their own such as a trash container for the playground with the slogan "Pitch In!" painted on it. Or they could build their own wagon with parts brought from home. Later, perhaps the finished product could be donated to an orphanage. Or, for a smaller scale project, they might work in pairs to make handprints for their parents for Christmas presents with one helping the other until each child had a finished product for giving.
4. What does it take to build a shoe? Look at your own shoes. Where did the idea begin for that shoe? (The designer.) How was it built? (By machines and hand finishing.) Who ran the machines? (People working together.) Who ordered supplies and decided on the right number of people needed? (The boss.) How did the shoe get to you? (By trains or trucks that delivered to the store.) Why did you buy that shoe? (Because I wanted new shoes and had the money to buy them.)

Additional literature: Production

Dan Frontier and the New House
by William Hurley
Benefic Press, Chicago, 1961.

Dan Frontier and the New House by William Hurley tells of the early days of the frontier when neighbor helped neighbor while working side by side. In this case, the Nelsons needed a good, strong house; and the use of the combined skills of their neighbors resulted in the production of a fine house.

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Probably many early factories began in a similar way. Neighbors and friends with varying skills pooled their efforts and turned out products that were needed at that time. Later, to meet the demand for greater production, factories were built and men were hired even though the men weren't known to the employer except by the work records that showed that these men possessed the skills needed by the factory.

Today merchandise is produced all over the world in such factories. But the basic principle of combining specialized skills for the manufacture of wanted products remains the same, as in frontier days.

Filmstrip: *"Tools and Simple Machines."* Popular Science, 40 frames, black and white. This filmstrip shows the helpfulness of tools and machinery to two youngsters who are visiting a farm. Another title is "On the Farm with Tom and Susan."

Grade: Primary

Literature: *A Bundle of Sticks*
by Katherine Evans
Albert Whitman and Co.,
Chicago, 1962.

Economic concept: Specialization

In *A Bundle of Sticks* by Katherine Evans, the children will read about a family of rug makers. Each of the three sons in the family had his own specialty or skill, but the production of a fine Persian rug required the use of all of their combined skills. Not until the father gave the boys a demonstration of this principle did they begin to cooperate with one another by combining the specialty of each into a finished prize-winning carpet.

The children will have noticed a familiar example of specialization in their trips to the supermarket. Certain employees work in the produce department with the lettuce, oranges, tomatoes, and other fresh groceries. Others work in the meat department, a very specialized area, or the canned goods, baked goods, or check-out stations almost all of the time. These people with their various skills keep the entire supermarket operation running smoothly so that even a young child can find products easily and load them into the shopping cart.

Activities:

1. A good example of specialization for young people to observe would be the one that the father demonstrated to his sons in *A Bundle of Sticks.* Gather some sticks of about the same size and let some of the children break a few of them single-handedly. Now, tie the rest together into a bundle and show the class the strength that results when sticks, or people, have formed into a large unit.
2. A visit to a newspaper office would clearly show to the class the advantages of specialization. There they would see the linotype operators, the reporters, the printers, the photographers, and the editors. Each one has a particular skill that is needed to put out the newspaper, and the newspaper producer has brought them together in order to make the maximum use of their individual talents.
3. Let the class make a newspaper of its own with a mainly pictorial representation of the class's activities. Special duties could be assigned such as artist, writer, headline writer, and editor. Each picture should have a caption explaining what it depicts. Then, if a copy machine could be brought into the classroom, each child could take a printed copy of his newspaper home to his parents.

Additional literature: Specialization

Peter and the Rocket Team
by Hazel W. Corson
Benefic Press, Chicago, 1964.

Peter and the Rocket Team by Hazel W. Corson demonstrates exceptionally well the skills required by rocket men and the teamwork needed for their success. These men really didn't want to help train a new person in their specialty because he would need more attention than they were willing to spare. But Jack proved that he could learn about this very special work very quickly, and eventually he was accepted as a part of the team.

Since rocketry has been so well publicized on TV, moon launchings and the like, the children are apt to understand quite easily the demands for excellence of the space program. And this book demonstrates in a very contemporary way how a group of men with very specialized training work together in producing rockets. Furthermore, this same specialization is needed in industry, in farming, and in the professions where men can work together for the greater benefit of all.

Filmstrip: *"Mike Mulligan and His Steam Shovel."* Weston Woods, 59 frames, color, guide, record.
This filmstrip tells of the many jobs a steam shovel can do and of one particular job that Mike's steam shove, Mary Anne, did.

Grade: Primary

Literature: *The Wump World*
by Bill Peet
Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, 1970.

Economic Concept: Scarcity

In *The Wump World* by Bill Peet, the children can hear about two contrasting worlds: the "Wump" world of reasonable wants and the "Pollutians' " world of uncontrolled wants. This story could act as a backdrop for a discussion of scarcity because the class could easily understand from the story the havoc caused by ungovernable greed. Finally, the earth's scarce supplies were wantonly used up. On the other hand, reasonable people such as the Wumps, who understand the need for planning, want to cut down on waste and make the best use of the resources that are available.

Since the book mentions black smoke dirtying the air, the teacher could ask the children where they have seen some. This could lead to a discussion about emissions from cars, buses, trains and factories; and perhaps some of the students will have seen on TV some of the announcements of progress being made by companies who try to produce the things people want but who understand the scarcity of clean air and want to help preserve it. Some of the examples that could be mentioned and discussed are anti-pollution devices for cars, electric cars for short-distance deliveries, and air-cleaning devices in factory smokestacks. Every child can readily understand that we people of Earth are using up tremendous quantities of the world's scarce resources, and that we need to find ways to become more like the "Wumps" and less like the "Pollutians."

Related Activities:

1. Have half the class make drawings of polluters at work that make the landscape dingy with smoke while the other half draws pictures of a cleaned-up world where production goes on but where pollution has been controlled. Use the first set on one bulletin board and the second set on another.
2. Plant a class tree in the school yard or in a nearby park that will help replace some day one of the trees that had to be used up in making paper for school supplies. Explain to the children that many lumber companies now try to replace the trees that they harvest; nevertheless, trees will always be in short supply in comparison to the world's uses for lumber.
3. Discuss some ways that young people could help conserve scarce materials. Some possibilities that could be mentioned: taking reusable bottles back to the store, returning clean grocery bags, collecting used aluminum cans for recycling, etc.

Additional literature: Scarcity

You Will Live Under the Sea
by F. and M. Phleger
Beginner Books, New York, 1966.

Another book that emphasizes the concept of scarcity is *You Will Live Under the Sea* by F. and M. Phleger. It tells us that before long the growing demands of ever larger populations will force us to explore under the sea in order to supplement the scarce resources on land.

The children will learn about the many possibilities of undersea life: underwater gardens, undersea miners, farmers, and ranchers. All of these contribute to the well-being of undersea dwellers. The book seems to stretch the imagination; yet it may be amazingly prophetic of the alternatives man must turn to in order to feed and house the exploding population.

If some of the children have brought articles back from a seashore visit, they should be encouraged to bring them to school so that the other children may see examples of the type of life that flourishes under the sea and that may be called upon more and more to help relieve our scarcity.

Filmstrip: *"The Miracle of the Sea."* Life, 85 frames, color.
This filmstrip explains some of the characteristics of the sea, which covers nearly three-fourths of the earth's surface.

Grade: Primary

Economic Concept: Decision Making

Literature: *What Do They Do When it Rains?* by Norman Bridwell Scholastic Book Services, New York, 1969.

In *What Do They Do When It Rains?* by Norman Bridwell, the children can observe the decision-making process in operation among people from all walks of life. As the class considers each sunny versus rainy day choice in the book, each child will also think about his own need for making decisions, not only when it rains but also at other times. Possibly he has never consciously thought about making choices before, a very important first step in understanding the importance of decision-making to the economy.

The teacher could talk about the choices that Mother must make when she shops for groceries as she considers price, quality, and her family's tastes. Also Father must decide about the kind of car he will drive. He must consider the price of the car, the design that he wishes, and the family's requirements for transportation. And the children have choices too about the clothing they wear or in their use of out-of-school time. After this discussion, the whole class will have given more thought than ever before to the problem of decision making.

To help the children understand the influences on decision making in the business world, remind them that their choices in buying, whether they buy goldfish or shoes or any other product, help the businessman make his decisions when he decides what he should manufacture or what he should stock in his retail store.

Activities:

1. Suggest that the class put on a short play. What are the choices that must be made? First, a play must be chosen that will fit the capabilities of the class. Next, the children would need to try out for the various parts with decisions eventually made about which child would play a certain part. Costumes, tickets, stage properties, etc. would have to be decided on also. And while all of these decisions are being made, the teacher could frequently remind the children that making choices is a very necessary part of life from the smallest decision about the color socks one would wear that day to the big corporate decisions about the car models that a certain company will produce in one year. Also, it seems inevitable that some members of the class will disagree about some of the choices that have been made. Here the teacher can point out that most decisions fail to please everyone at first, no matter whether they are made by a class vote, a teacher's or student director's choice, a board of directors, or a corporation president. But the choices must be made so that the play can proceed or so that the product can be manufactured. Decision making, then, is shown to be a vital part of the economic process.
2. Ask the children whether any of them have ever had a lemonade stand. Then ask them what kinds of decisions they would need to make before they were ready to sell lemonade. Some possibilities could be suggested: how much to make, what to make it in, what quantities of lemons, sugar and water to mix, whether to use cups or glasses and should they be paper or china, where to put the stand, how to attract customers, what price should be charged, and how to divide the profits, if any. Such a discussion would reinforce the ideas about decision making brought out in *What Do They Do When It Rains?* and help even very young children understand this highly important economic concept.

Additional literature: Decision Making

Pearl Goes to School
by Evelyn Hastings.
Follett Publishing Co.,
Chicago, 1962.

A number of decisions had to be made by the people in a story called *Pearl Goes to School* by Evelyn Hastings. Pearl decided to go to school. The teacher decided to bring Pearl into the school. And the boys decided to make a cage for Pearl. Finally, little Bill decided to let Pearl stay at school for a while.

Many children have pets that require similar decision-making, and they will be able to understand both from the book and from personal experience that decision making plays a big part in the direction our lives take. In our private lives as well as in the business world, decisions must be made. Some may only affect one person or one thing, while others may change lives, jobs, and products.

The decision makers need to have as much information as possible at their disposal so that they can arrive at their decisions after having considered each course wisely even as little Bill decided to let Pearl stay at school when he saw how carefully the children had provided for her well-being.

Filmstrip: *"Airplanes at Work."* Curriculum, 27 frames, color.
This filmstrip tells about airplanes: their fuels, their control towers, their weather problems, their passengers, and their freight uses.

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